

Program Inspires Healthcare Professionals to Help Patients Kick the Habit

Issue

Despite significant advances in treatment for tobacco dependence, the medical community has been less than enthusiastic about addressing the number one preventable cause of death and disability in America because members perceive the problem as unmanageable. Healthcare professionals often cite a lack of training and time constraints as barriers in addressing the issue with clients.

Tobacco use is a major risk factor of the three leading causes of death in Newberry County—heart disease, cancer, and stroke, and smoking contributes to all major illnesses and health conditions. In 2004, heart disease was the leading cause of death in Newberry County, and in 2003, 24% of the county population smoked. This rate was close to the state smoking rate of 26%.

Intervention

Through a partnership with the Living Water Foundation in Newberry and with two rounds of grant funding from the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, healthcare providers in Newberry County receive training in the *US Public Health Service Clinical Practice Guidelines for Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence*. Without the availability of Block Grant funds to cover salary costs, this project would not have been possible. The trainings, which include assessing a patient's willingness and readiness to quit using tobacco products through a brief intervention, are conducted by DHEC Region 3 Chronic Disease Risk Reduction staff. The project's objective is to increase the number of health care centers that adopt the Guidelines as a standard practice so ultimately providers will be encouraged to help patients seek cessation resources and learn about the dangers of tobacco use. Initiatives include:

- Targeting all healthcare centers and providers in Newberry County including, but not limited to, physicians' practices, dental practices, Newberry College Student Health Center, and the Newberry County Health Department.
- Implementing a referral system for tobacco cessation services available within the county that can be accessed by individuals wanting to quit using tobacco products.
- Tracking the number of referrals made for cessation services. Health care providers receive a \$10 stipend for each cessation referral they make.

Impact

At the end of eighteen months on June 30, 2006, eight health care centers, including the county health department and Newberry College, received training. As a result of the partnership between the Living Water Foundation and DHEC Region 3:

- Thirty-six healthcare professionals received training.
- A total of 230 referrals for cessation services were made, which indicates that each of these patients received a brief tobacco intervention from their healthcare provider.
- Newberry County Memorial Hospital adopted a policy to institute a tobacco-free campus on January 1, 2007. Research has shown that smoke-free and tobacco-free policies lead to increase in the number of people seeking cessation resources.

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